The College and FSU value the following principles of trust, confidentiality, respect, fairness, equality, dignity, diversity, security and safety in order to offer the highest quality education, learning experience and student life in this academic community.

These principles encompass all student activities under the banner of Fanshawe College and/or FSU, on and off College campuses. All participants entering into this moral and social contract will commit to the following principles:

### Students have the right to:

- a safe, secure and accessible College environment, suitable and reasonable for learning, study and wellness
- a positive environment conducive to learning characterized by equality and mutual respect that remains free from personal bias, and unlawful harassment and discrimination
- timely, objective, fair and reasonable academic evaluation methods that are reflective of academic, occupational and industry standards and competencies
- timely notification of all academic and administrative decisions that affect their College community life (in writing and including supporting rationale where required by College policy)
- timely and appropriate services and supports to foster a positive and meaningful educational experience
- seek clarification of, or recourse on, all decisions under College policies that affect them without fear of reprisal
- the protection of privacy and confidentiality of personal information, subject to limits in accordance with the law

### Students have the responsibilities to:

- abide by all applicable federal, provincial and municipal law
- treat members of the College community with respect
- follow all reasonable direction provided by the College and/or FSU
- be engaged in the pursuit of learning within an ordered academic environment
- adhere to the Student Code of Conduct and other relevant College/FSU practices, policies and procedures
- be honest and truthful and not make any false, misleading or inflammatory statements or allegations
- report any wrongdoing or unlawful activities to the College and/or FSU officials
- ensure all College and/or FSU visitor(s) are informed of the expectations outlined in the Code of Conduct
- adhere to the “fair information principles” and abide by College policies respecting the privacy of others and the confidentiality of personal information

### College and FSU have the responsibilities to:

- abide by all applicable federal, provincial and municipal law
- act in the best interest of students following the principles of 1) act in good faith, 2) be reasonable, 3) adhere to set standards and 4) place appropriate weight on information gathered against set criteria
- provide an environment conducive to learning that is safe, secure and accessible; suitable and reasonable for learning, study and wellness
- provide students timely and relevant advice and guidance
- publish accessible and relevant information (e.g. program and course content and academic progression criteria)
- ensure no changes to practices, policies or procedures will apply retroactively to the detriment of the student
- adhere to the “fair information principles” and collect, use and disclose personal information in accordance with the law, including the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Personal Health Information Protection Act
- protect the security of students while maintaining the physical facilities to government, educational and appropriate industry standards
- promote dispute resolution through the assistance of the Office of the Ombuds

The College and the FSU will meet annually to review and, if both parties agree, to renew the Statement. In signing this document, the Presidents are committing the College and the FSU to the principles set forth.
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Executive Summary:

This year the Office of the Ombuds celebrated its 20th anniversary and took the opportunity to recognize Fanshawe College and the Fanshawe Student Union for their unwavering and dedicated support of raising fairness awareness within the College community. Fanshawe College’s Vice President Cathie Auger and Fanshawe Student Union’s Operations Manager John b. Young were recognized for their years of guidance, vision, dedication and leadership to the Office of the Ombuds and its mandate. Each was presented with a document of recognition signed by Fanshawe College President, Peter Devlin, Fanshawe Student Union President Adam Gourlay and myself, Acting Ombuds - Rose Valle. Students were invited to enter an online draw and several prizes were awarded at the pizza lunch hosted in Forwell Hall on December 4, 2013.

This report marks the 20th annual report of the Office of the Ombuds to the Fanshawe College Community. It has been my pleasure to serve as your Ombuds person for the past several months while Greg Hessian, Ombuds for Fanshawe College was on leave working as Chair in the School of Building Technology, Fanshawe College.

Upon commencing my appointment, I had learned that in May of 2013, Fanshawe College was commended in its final report from the Program Quality Assurance Process Audit (PQAPA) for having one of only a few Colleges with an Ombuds. The members of the audit panel who are tasked with assessing the effectiveness of the College’s quality assurance processes were impressed with the positive role provided by this service as well as the benefits to students and College staff. The audit is coordinated by the Ontario College Quality Assurance Service (OCQAS), an independent body who ensures programs leading to an Ontario College credential conform to the Ministry approved Credentials Framework.

Within the context of administrative and academic decision-making, the College strives to adhere to the principles highlighted in Fanshawe College’s Rights and Responsibilities Statement. This statement is recommitted to each year with an official signing by both the President of Fanshawe College and the President of the Fanshawe College Student Union. This demonstrates support from senior leadership and ensures the fair and equitable treatment of all students.

The Ombuds will help the student analyze the difficulty or dispute, identify the substantive issue, and promote an understanding of the applicable policy or policies. The Ombuds continues to employ a mentoring and coaching model that empowers students to resolve their own concerns by working collaboratively with decision makers.

Many have taken advantage of the Ombuds ability to provide facilitation and mediation services for conflicts that arise between the students and faculty, students and administrators, and /or students and their employers / supervisors within the College.

Having difficult and crucial conversations are part of life. In many cases this is the first time that a student is required to self-advocate or have these types of difficult conversations on their own. Often the stakes are high, emotions come into play and it may become difficult for two opposing parties to see that there is any common ground. Preserving the student / professor, student / administrator, student / student or student / employer relationship is often important and in many cases imperative to a harmonious College Community environment.
Last year’s annual report stressed the importance of the College having an online Fairness Course available to all decision makers within the College Community. Work has been underway for the past several months to implement this recommendation with the newly created Fairness Working Group being well ahead of schedule to complete this course the next year.

This year’s annual report focusses on the importance of identifying and applying approved College Policy to support fair decision making. College policy must be approved by the Fanshawe College President. Departments within the College are permitted to develop their own departmental procedures to support these policies without any requirement to have these procedures endorsed. These procedures, however, must comply and align with approved College Policies. Should a conflict arise between the two, College Policy will prevail. This year the Office of the Ombuds identified this as an area requiring clarity and consistency.

It has been my pleasure to serve as Ombuds person during a time of intense change that saw the College revitalize itself by identifying a new strategic framework with a bold new vision of unlocking potential along with a new mission and values statement that helps shape the College’s future. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to work with supportive leaders who value fairness to students above all.

B.A.,M.A.,C.Med.,RRP,MCVP
Acting Ombuds
Update on Prior Recommendations
Work in Progress

2009-2010 Recommendation:

To provide all college community members electronically accessible Course Information Sheets (CIS) for College course offerings and Program Information Sheets (PIS) for program offerings. The CIS must remain current, reflect college standards, and comply with college policy.

The College continues to support this recommendation. It has been prioritized amongst IT projects. A follow up is planned for this year.

2009-2010 Recommendation:

To create an Academic Integrity educational course and an evaluation method to be electronically accessible to all college community members that outlines to the learner what is the college’s definition of academic integrity, how students may adhere to academic integrity principles, what the college considers academic violation, and the consequences of each offence. The completion of the course may be used as an alternative resolution to a first level offence and fulfill the college’s obligation of educating students in suspected academic violation cases.

The College confirms that this course has been completed and is available online for use by members of the College Community. In addition, the newly updated academic integrity policy identifies that completing the academic integrity module may form part of a penalty for committing an academic offence. As per policy, this penalty is designed to assist the student to develop a greater level of understanding of Academic Integrity and is regarded as a learning opportunity. The College will work towards promoting the use of this course and consider including it in College Procedures and Orientations sessions.

2010-2011 Recommendation:

To incorporate the “Duty of Care” concept and the “act in the best interest of the student” belief in the most appropriate College policies and documents.

College Council accepted this recommendation. The concept and belief are inherent when reviewing and revising policies. The College – Student Union Committee continue to ensure that this concept is inherent within the Fanshawe College Rights and Responsibilities Statement and College culture.
2011-2012 Recommendation:

The Office of the Ombuds recommends the development and promotion of an on-line fairness course, which includes educational components that will be available to all College community members, free of charge.

The Fairness working Group has been created and work is underway and in progress to have this course completed well ahead of schedule. The committee has been made up of representatives from across the College and is being chaired by the College Ombuds person.

Committee Members:

1. Rose Valle - Chair (Acting Ombuds Person)
2. Greg Hessian - Academic Services Representative (Acting Chair - School of Building Technology)
3. Adam Gourlay - FSU Representative (Fanshawe Student Union President 2012/2013)
4. Tracy Gedies - Curriculum/Quality Improvement Representative (Director, Centre for Academic Excellence)
5. Jeff Low - Employee Relations Representative (Acting Director, Human Resources)
6. Heather Cummings - Student Services Representative (Executive Director, Student Success)
7. Ben Cecil - College Policy Representative (Associate Vice President, Academic Excellence and Innovation)
8. John b. Young - FSU Representative (Operations Manager - Fanshawe Student Union)
Reflection:

Over the past year, the College has seen a change in leadership, a new vision, mission and values statement that are key components of the College’s Strategic Framework, as well as a new brand identity or logo, North Star. As the College was striving towards revitalizing itself with a new slogan to educate, engage, empower and excite, I was encouraged by the dedication and willingness of the College Community to embrace and welcome the change while maintaining their commitment of fairness to the students of Fanshawe College.

As an educational institution of choice, Fanshawe College strives to continually improve student satisfaction. One of the key elements of student satisfaction rests in the student’s perception of how they were treated - i.e. fairness.

Many students are more likely to accept a decision, whether they agree with it or not, if they believe the decision was fair and that they have been treated fairly.

Students are encouraged to bring forward their issues and concerns about fairness to the Ombuds who is a neutral, confidential and independent resource to students. The Office advocates for fairness and promotes a mentoring and coaching model to address student issues so that students will feel empowered to manage conflicts or issues in a professional and relevant manner.

To achieve this, the Ombuds will review the situation together with the student while attempting to differentiate between the emotional and substantive issues. The Ombuds will then review any relevant documentation used by a decision maker and help identify why the student feels or believes it is unfair. This could include a review of policies, procedures, practices, guidelines, course information sheets and so on.

The Ombuds will encourage the student to utilize a framework to conceptualize their complaint. Although many models exist, the Office uses a model similar to the one described below:

1. **Issue clarification:** Does the student understand and can the student articulate what the issue in dispute is
2. **Identification of relevant policy, procedures and/or practices:** Is the student aware of the document relied on by the decision maker to make the decision
3. **Identification of the facts used in making the decision:** Is the student clear about what facts were used to form the basis of the decision believed to be unfair
4. **The decision:** Is the student clear about what the decision is
5. **Clarification:** Has the student been invited to seek clarification from the decision maker
6. **Options:** Does the student understand their options should they disagree with the decision
7. **Openness:** Does the student understand why other individuals may have been copied in on a decision

It is important to recognize that the student always maintains control of how their fairness issue or concern is dealt with or handled. The Ombuds assists the student with identifying the options available as well as any recourse the student may have. As the Ombuds deals with any issues or concerns pertaining to student life, it would be noteworthy to mention that, although not captured in the student data, a number of fairness issues do come to the attention of the Ombuds by anonymous callers, anonymous letters, faculty, staff as well as alumni and the general public. This is indicative of a culture that values fairness. In addition to dealing with individual or group complaints, the Ombuds reviews trends and possible issues or concerns.
When visiting the Ombuds, students typically explain why they believe a particular situation is unfair from an individual or systemic perspective\(^1\). To assist the students and the College with identifying the fairness concerns, the Ombuds assesses the matter under one of the following fairness categories:

1) Openness and transparency
2) Consistency of decision-making
3) Trueness of the application of policy
4) Completeness of a practice or procedure

**Consistency of decision-making\(^2\):** Decision-making within the college follows a hierarchal and principle-based system to ensure consistency and alignment with the college’s values and principles. Essentially this ensures everyone is treated in the same manner. College policies and processes provide students with the opportunity to seek clarification and/or appeal academic and administrative decisions affecting them.

**Trueness of the application of policy\(^3\):** The Ombuds reviews individual complaints and highlights situations where the intent and/or spirit of the principles of the policy appear to have been misinterpreted or misapplied. The Ombuds evaluates the trueness of the application of policy with a goal of remedying the situation.

**Completeness of a practice or procedure\(^4\):** At times, the Ombuds receives student concerns relating to the completeness of the application of an administrative or academic decision-making process. In this type of situation, the Ombuds typically ensures students understand that they may seek clarification and there may be alternatives to remedy the situation. The Ombuds provides students with a framework to assist them in preparing for conversations related to their concerns. In these situations, the student and/or college may request mediation services provided by the Ombuds.

\(^1\) Systemic issues are defined as issues or concerns that may have affected or have the potential to affect, a number of students who brings the issue or concern forward.

\(^2\) 2009/10 Office of the Ombuds Annual Report

\(^3\) 2009/10 Office of the Ombuds Annual Report

\(^4\) 2009/10 Office of the Ombuds Annual Report
Openness and transparency⁶: Within the context of the College’s decision-making structure, there are safeguards in place to ensure decisions do not 1) reflect any one person’s special interests and 2) allows for the validation and review of decisions against set criteria. The Ombuds assists students in interpreting college documents with respect to the decision(s) made that has raised concern.

As mentioned in previous reports, the principles highlighted in Fanshawe College’s Rights and Responsibilities Statement help shape practices, processes, procedures, guidelines and policies within the context of administrative and academic decision-making. The signed copy is released and published in the student handbook each year.

This increased awareness of rights and responsibilities endorsed by senior leadership serves as a positive indicator that the College Community as a whole values the promotion of fairness and fair practices to students.
Recommendations For 2012/13

Recommendation # 1: The Office of the Ombuds recommends that each school within the College Community review their departmental procedures and course information sheets to ensure compliance and alignment with existing College Policies.

Recognizing that there may be practices and procedures that have become entrenched within department and program cultures; it is further recommended that where inconsistencies with College approved policies exist; these areas be identified and brought forward to College Policy makers for consideration and review.

Recommendation # 2: The Office of the Ombuds recommends that students have access to the Notice of Appeal of a Grade / Academic Decision form via electronic format.

Recommendation # 3: The Office of the Ombuds recommends that that the following forms be reviewed by the relevant departments with an eye to improving the content and language to ensure clarity and student acknowledgement.

a) The International Fee Extension Form: The form the student is required to sign should outline the penalty costs that will be added to the outstanding tuition amount owing

b) The Academic Offence Form: The form should be modified to include a space for the student’s signature acknowledging receipt of the academic offence form and should further include a space for any comments the student may have

Recommendation # 4: The Office of the Ombuds recommends that where a program requires a student to attend any form of work placement that the following be considered:

a) A mandatory workshop for students be delivered prior to the student attending placement (this could be done at the College or arranged by the College at the work placement)

b) Students be advised that any special needs or accommodation requests need to be reviewed by the appropriate parties to ensure suitability and if required work placement accommodation or modification assistance
**2012/13 General Trends & Data Observations:**

The data collected by the Office of the Ombuds is used, in part, to create the Ombuds annual report. The data helps the Office identify fairness issues and trends within the College Community and make recommendations for overall quality improvement.

There are times where a visitor will bring an issue forward to the Ombuds for resolution of an individual student matter however the impact of the resolution may affect several students. The data captured in this report would only capture the one student who brought the matter forward and not the several that may have benefited from the resolution.

The number of visitors has increased by about 15%. Basic trends identified are consistent with previous reporting years. There were no statistically significant variations in the data that would raise any concern from this Office. The fairness concerns raised throughout the reporting period appear to be consistent with previous years.

**Diagram 1: Fairness Issues per Visitors:**

This chart provides a breakdown of the five fairness categories that the Ombuds uses to classify complaints. There were no statistically significant changes from previous reporting years.

**Diagram 2: Visitors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Inside Mandate</th>
<th>Resolution without Direct Intervention</th>
<th>Resolution with Direct Intervention</th>
<th>Outside Mandate or Unknown</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Resolution without direct intervention means: student self-advocacy, within the Ombuds coaching/mentoring model.*
This chart shows the total number of visitors for each of the past 4 years. This information captures data related to whether the student’s fairness issue falls within the Ombuds mandate. An example of where a fairness issue would not fall within the Office’s mandate would be a student who is denied their transcript due to having outstanding fees owing to the College.

**Diagram 3: Visitor Gender**

![Chart showing visitor gender by year](chart1.png)

There were no significant changes in the ratio of male to female visitors to the Office for the reporting period identified.

**Diagram 4: Visitor by Area of Study**

![Chart showing visitors by area of study](chart2.png)

This chart outlines which program the student who brings forward the fairness concern is registered in. It is important to note here that the complaint may be with a service or other department within the College. This chart simply outlines where the student is registered.
The breakdown of the Strategic Enrollment Management Plan identifies different persona groups in order to identify unique needs. Based on the data, there has not been any significant change in the breakdown of fairness concerns from the various persona groups identified.

Findings in these categories are fairly consistent with previous reporting years.
Diagram 7: Visitor GPA Ranges

This diagram provides a breakdown of the GPA of the student that brings forward an issue to the Ombuds. Of interest is that the 3.0 to the 3.999 GPA category increased by almost 40%. That would be statistically significant and could indicate that the higher a student’s GPA, the more inclined they are to bring forward a fairness concern or issue.

Diagram 8: Visitor Nature of Difficulty or Dispute

This chart more specifically outlines the nature of the dispute or difficulty and what area the concern is in. The academic area accounts for over 50% of the student complaints which is consistent with previous reporting years.
The Office Of The Ombuds

Mission

To promote a college community environment where all students may address and resolve their concerns or issues in a manner that is consistent with the Office of the Ombuds' mandate of impartiality, independence and confidentiality.